

# 'How I'm Feeling' brings mixed feelings

Lauv falls into melancholy malaise

By HOLLY GASKILL



Ari Leff, who performs as Lauv, moves away from his classic love songs in "How I'm Feeling."

In the modern age of love and loneliness, Lauv released a catchy pop album about mental battles.

Ari Leff, who performs under the stage name Lauv, released his long-anticipated album, "How I'm Feeling," on March 6 after releasing six singles over the last year.

Although Leff's first album came out in 2014, he gained mainstream popularity after the release of his second album in 2017, featuring pop love songs, "I Like Me Better" and "Paris in the Rain."

With each new single, however, Leff introduced a new aspect of the story that was going to be revealed in "How I'm Feeling."

Moving away from his classic love songs, Leff released "I'm So Tired" as his first new single, where he proved that he was done with simple and unrealistic love songs.

The full release of the album revealed a complete ode to struggling to find something real.

"I think part of what made me so sad was feeling like I trapped myself in this bubble where I can only be this one-dimensional person because that's what I thought people expected of me," Leff said in a "Vogue" interview. "I was so afraid to let people down or give them something they didn't want, so I kind of pushed down a lot of my personality."

Amidst temporal fame, one-night stands and messy break-ups, Leff writes about his ups and downs through an undeniably catchy mix of pop beats, acoustic instruments and unique vocals.

The album also features Anne-Marie, Alessia Cara, LANY, Troye Sivan, Sofia Reyes and BTS.

"It's very diverse and just amazing," said freshman Syndey Ruiter. "What can I say?"

"Julia" especially stands out from the rest of the album.

Written for ex-girlfriend and singer Julia Michaels, Leff sings an apology solely accompanied by piano. Leff makes a point to recognize his mental health and immaturity as a factor in the relationship, adding that if

he could go back, he would leave her alone. It holds the most raw and real reflection from Leff, as well as his best singing.

Overall, the album gives a peek into the mind of a modern popstar—mental illness, drugs, heartbreak and all—that feeds the trend for melancholy music.

However, how many times can this trope be repeated before it becomes entirely lackluster?

“Lauv is well-versed in industry trends, having previously penned hits with Charli XCX and Demi Lovato, and he mostly couples his timely observations with a similarly vogueish mid-tempo electropop,” writes Rachel Aroesti in *The Guardian*. “Restrained and airless, it is the kind that sounds as if every beat has been placed with a pair of tweezers, and that you have to listen to three times to work out which bit is the chorus. It’s not a particularly thrilling or inventive mode, but then *How I’m Feeling* isn’t designed to knock the socks off whole populations. Rather, its lightly worn melodies and generically hip sonics seem machine-tooled to creep into its target audience’s subconscious, where its tales of youthful disaffection can be readily absorbed into their own tumultuous inner worlds.”

While there are some upbeat and danceable songs, all 21 tracks have a sad or bittersweet message to them. Their trendiness and quality will likely take much of the album into mainstream popularity, but overall it is not likely to be a standout of 2020.

Ultimately, “How I’m Feeling” is a fun and worthwhile listen, but not likely to be a classic to be played again and again.

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